

# INTERSECTING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 1450-1700 Trade, Conquest, Missions, Enslavement

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Rome, 30-31 January 2025

Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

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Dipartimento di Studi Europei, Americani e Interculturali, Sapienza Università di Roma

## PROGRAMME AND BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

EDITED BY

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PROGETTI DI RICERCA DI RILEVANTE INTERESSE NAZIONALE (PRIN 2022) - REF.: 2022SY2K7

"MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES AND LANGUAGES.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)"

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<https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/mapping-translating-prin22-cnr/home>

## SYNOPSIS

The symposium "Intersecting Sub-Saharan Africa, 1450-1700. Trade, Conquests, Missions, Enslavement" is organised in the context of the PRIN 2022 Project "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures, and Languages. Experiences from the Missions Connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700) - [MAT]. The MAT Project has three main objectives:

- a. Drawing up a comprehensive analytical catalogue of overlooked, dispersed metalinguistic and multilingual sources - reports, letters, Christian doctrines, word lists, lexicons, grammars, and maps that describe linguistic practices and/or display bilingual or three-lingual evidence - produced mostly in missionary contexts.
- b. Studying the emergence of multilingual communities in early modernity involving cultures and languages that were previously unknown in Europe.
- c. Within this broad "horizontal" survey, highlighting two case studies to carry out an in-depth "vertical" comparative analysis of cultural-linguistic contacts and translations in Sub-Saharan Africa and China, specifically chosen because they are two paradigmatic, coeval cases detailing the different shades of cultural translations in colonial and missionary contexts.

"Intersecting Sub-Saharan Africa, 1450-1700" is an endeavour to direct attention to some of the heterogeneous contexts of Africa at the time of the arrival of Portuguese merchants and Catholic missionaries on the Western and Eastern shores of Sub-Saharan Africa. This research trajectory is developed within the broad horizon of connected, or at least synchronic, history with the kingdoms of Western Sub-Saharan Africa, Islamic and Ottoman Africa, Ethiopia, and Southeast Africa. The symposium is structured into seven consecutive sessions: Missionary Perspectives; Parallel Islamic Networks Across Africa; Ethiopia; Mapping, Translating and Classifying Africa in a Global Context; Perspectives on Enslavement; Visual and Material Interactions and Exchanges; and finally Linguistic Interactions and Exchanges.

The interactions between European powers, Catholic religious orders, and African kingdoms intertwined political, economic, and religious interests, turning Africa-Europe relations into a complex arena of dominance and exchange that also impacted the world on a global scale.

We have chosen as the icon of the symposium an ivory hip-pendant mask, currently held at the MET in New York, created in the early sixteenth century in Benin, which is believed to have been produced for the King of Benin, Oba Esigie (1504-1550), to honour his mother, Idia. It is an idealised portrait with scarification marks inlaid in the metal and carved into the forehead and with bands of coral beads under the chin. The diadem and openwork collar are adorned

with stylised depictions of mudfish and bearded faces of Portuguese men. Due to their connection with the sea, mudfish symbolise the king's dual human and divine nature, while the Portuguese were associated with the spirit realm that brought wealth and power to the Oba. Ivory, a key export and symbol of purity linked to the god Olokun, the spiritual counterpart of the Oba, underlines the trade links between the kingdom of Benin and the Portuguese merchants. The mask embodies some of the central themes of our symposium: the plurality of relationships, interactions and exchanges between Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe in the period between 1450 and 1700. The symbolic richness of the mask reflects the central role of art and material culture in the construction of identity, authority, and cross-cultural ties.

Intersecting Africa is a multidisciplinary symposium that convenes archivists, linguists, historians of art, missions, Islamic Africa, Ottoman Africa, Western Sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia, and Southeast Africa. The initiative focuses on a number of macro-themes that intercept the history of Africa from plural and complementary perspectives between 1450 and 1700. These themes include the history of missionary presence and missionary geographies, both before and after the establishment and intervention of the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, as well as the first linguistic interactions documented by grammars and lexicons of African languages in European languages. A second key theme concerns the pervasive and disruptive role of slavery and reflection on enslavement, both to justify and counter it, at the interface of missionary action and presence. Additionally, we will examine the history of material and visual cultures developed in some Christian \ missionary contexts in Africa and their reception, including misinterpretations and re-contextualisation, in European archives and collections. Furthermore, we will analyse early representations of Africa and Africans addressed to Japanese and Chinese missionary contexts, within the global framework of Jesuit knowledge networks.

Seemingly antinomial and yet synchronous phenomena, such as the impact of trans-continental trade and multiple religious networks; the rescaling of the enslaving processes of Black Africans to a global scale, brought forward by Europeans, primarily Portuguese merchants, followed later by other European powers; the emergence of colonial categorization and hierarchical classifications; the production and circulation of knowledge, mediation and translations; the resilience of local African traditions to the imposition of European paradigms, in which African cultures reinterpreted and negotiated external influences: these are some of the main dynamics emerging from the joint contributions of the several scholars participating in the symposium “Intersecting Sub-Saharan Africa, 1450-1700. Trade, Conquests, Missions, Enslavement.”

# INTERSECTING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 1450-1700

## Trade, Conquest, Missions, Enslavement

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Rome, 30-31 January 2025

### PROGRAMME

**Thursday, 30 January 2025 - Sapienza Università di Roma - Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia - Aula Partenone**

#### **9:30 - Welcome Greetings and Introduction**

Arianna Punzi (Preside della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Sapienza Università di Roma)

Paola Avallone (Direttrice dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Introduction*

#### **10:00 - Session 1 - MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVES**

Chair: Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Barbara Turchetta (Università di Bergamo), *Mapping the Understanding of the Unknown. Places, Languages and Cultures in the European Discovery of the African Continent*

Flavio Belluomini, (Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide), Giulia Maggiore (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR) *Propaganda Fide and the Congo Mission at the Time of Urban VIII*

Patrizia Morelli (Archivio Ordine Frati Minori Cappuccini), *Capuchin Missionaries in Sub-Saharan West Africa: Bridging Faith and Cultures (17th-18th Century)*

#### **11:30 - Coffee break**

## 12:00 - Session 2 - PARALLEL ISLAMIC NETWORKS ACROSS AFRICA

Chair: Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner (CSIC - Incipit, Santiago de Compostela)

Francesco Zappa (Sapienza Università di Roma), *A Contact Zone: "Islamic Languages" in Africa and Beyond*

Nicola Melis (Università di Cagliari), *Tripoli as an Ottoman Gateway to Trans-Saharan Networks (1500–1700)*

## 13:00 - Lunch break

## 14:30 - Session 3 - ETHIOPIA

Chair: Sabina Pavone (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale)

Matteo Salvatore (American University of Sharjah), *The Production and Circulation of Ethiopianist Knowledge in Early Modern Europe, 1400s-1650s*

Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner (CSIC - Incipit, Santiago de Compostela), *Hermeneutics for Ethiopia. A Laboratory of Texts in the Service of the Jesuit Proselytising Project*

Guia Boni (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale), *Damião de Góis: a Portuguese Humanist at the Courts of Europe*

## 16:00 - Coffee break

## 16:30 - Session 4 - MAPPING, TRANSLATING, AND CLASSIFYING AFRICA IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Chair: Matteo Salvatore (American University of Sharjah)

Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), *Placing and Classifying Africa for a Japanese Audience: The De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam (Macao 1590) and the Contempt for Africa and Blackness*

Paolo De Troia (Sapienza Università di Roma), *"The Lord of Heaven gives to man without limit": Africa in 17th-Century Sino-Jesuit Atlases*

Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *"His slave, our slave, your slave, their slaves": The Place of Africa in Missionary Grammars*

**Friday, 31 January 2025 - Sapienza Università di Roma - Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia - Aula Partenone**

### **9:30 - Session 5 - PERSPECTIVES ON ENSLAVEMENT**

Chair: Cécile Fromont (Harvard University)

Festo Mkenda SJ (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu), *Moulding a Language for Slavery: The Preponderance of Slaves and Enslaving Practices in António Gomes' 1648 'Viagem ao Império de Monomotapa'*

José Lingna Nafafé (University of Bristol), *Legal and Religious Languages of the Portuguese Slave Trade Challenged in Favour of Universal Freedom: The Case of Lourenço da Silva Mendonça*

Luis Martínez Ferrer (Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma), *Emanuele Ne Vunda, Known as the "Negrita," and His Embassy to Rome from the Congo (1604-1608)*

Glória de Santana Paula (Centre for History of the University of Lisbon, CH-ULisboa), *"Cafraria": The Construction of a Geographical and Anthropological Category*

**11:30 - Coffee break**

### **12:00 - Session 6 - VISUAL AND MATERIAL INTERACTIONS AND EXCHANGES**

Chair: Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Vera-Simone Schulz (Leuphana University, Lüneburg - Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz), *Matters of Scale. Afro-Eurasian Connectivity in Coastal East Africa*

Cécile Fromont (Harvard University), *Idol? Image? Fetish? Naming Spiritually Empowered Things of the Early Modern Central African*

Deborah Dainese (Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich), *Tiotioro? Material Translation and Transcultural Entanglements in the Modern Era: A Case Study from the Ethnographic Collections of the Ethnological Museum "Anima Mundi" (Vatican Museums)*

Gaia Delpino, Rosa Anna Di Lella (Museo delle Civiltà, Roma), *Translated Objects, Narrated Objects. African Collections of the Museum of Civilizations between Representations, Misunderstandings and Silences*

#### 14:00 - Lunch break

#### 15:30 - Session 7 - LINGUISTIC INTERACTIONS AND EXCHANGES

Chair: Barbara Turchetta (Università di Bergamo); Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)  
Mariagrazia Russo (Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma), *Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo (1621-1678) and His Testimony as a Missionary in Africa*

Gonçalo Fernandes (University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real), *Pioneering Linguistic Descriptions of Bantu Languages in 17th-Century Angola and Kongo*

Dominique Tougbo Koffi (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan), *Legacy of the Slave Trade in the Endogenous Linguistic Universe of Côte d'Ivoire*

#### 17:00 - Coffee break

Béatrice Akissi Boutin (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Societies and Linguistic Exchanges between Europeans and Africans on the West Coast of the Gulf of Guinea (15th-18th c.). New Evidences*

Nicolas Quint (CNRS/ EPHE/ INALCO, Parigi), *Capeverdean Creole: an Overview of the Conditions of Emergence of an Afro-Portuguese Language Born from Linguistic and Intercultural Contact*

#### 18:00 - Final Remarks



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Americani e Interculturali - SEAI

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### BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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"MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES AND LANGUAGES.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)"



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Queen Mother Pendant Mask (Iyoba), 16th century, Edo peoples, Court of Benin, Nigeria, ivory, iron, copper, 23.8 x 12.7 x 8.3 cm (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/318622>

## Thursday, 30 January 2025 - Sapienza Università di Roma - Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia - Aula Partenone

### 9:30 - Welcome Greetings and Introduction

Arianna Punzi (Presidente della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Sapienza Università di Roma)

Paola Avallone (Direttrice, Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Introduction*

### 10:00 - Session 1- MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVES

Chair: Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Barbara Turchetta (Università di Bergamo), *Mapping the Understanding of the Unknown. Places, Languages and Cultures in the European Discovery of the African Continent*

Flavio Belluomini (Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide), Giulia Maggiore (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), *Propaganda Fide and the Congo Mission at the Time of Urban VIII*

Patrizia Morelli (Archivio Ordine Frati Minori Cappuccini), *Capuchin Missionaries in Sub-Saharan West Africa: Bridging Faith and Cultures (17th-18th Century)*

**Barbara Turchetta** (Università di Bergamo)

#### ***Mapping the Understanding of the Unknown. Places, Languages and Cultures in the European Discovery of the African Continent***

The talk briefly considers the steps of European exploration of the African continent, investigating the role that the description of territories, languages and cultures played in the European imagination and in the representation of contemporary African societies.

**Barbara Turchetta** is an expert in contact linguistics, sociolinguistics of multiculturalism, second language learning, interlingual and intercultural contacts. Her preferred geographical areas of research are Sub-Saharan Africa, Near and Middle East, European countries in the Mediterranean area. She is full Professor SSD LLIN01 at the University of Bergamo and lecturer in Variational Linguistics, Migration Linguistics, Linguistic Typology, Linguistic Landscape.

**Flavio Belluomini** (Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide)

**Giulia Maggiore** (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

### **Propaganda Fide and the Congo Mission at the Time of Urban VIII**

This research focuses on the missionary projects and activities of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide in Africa during the pontificate of Urban VIII (1623-1644), with special attention to Congo and Angola. The analysis delves into the Congregation's involvement in Africa through the scrutiny and analysis of manuscript sources held in the Historical Archives of Propaganda Fide. Among the main themes that emerge from the sources and that will be analysed are: the shortage of missionaries; the debate on whether to make recourse to clergy coming from Europe or native clergy; the specific roles of the religious orders involved, particularly Augustinians and Capuchins; the requests and claims presented to the Congregation and the proponents of those requests and their goals. The paper aims to highlight the intersections and overlapping of religious and political concerns in the context of early modern missions.

**Flavio Belluomini** is the Archivist of the Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide. Graduated in Archival, Paleographic and Diplomatic Studies from the Scuola di Archivistica-Paleografia-Diplomatica dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze and in Librarian Sciences from the Scuola Vaticana di Biblioteconomia. After his studies at the Università Gregoriana, he started to teach Church History at the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose della Toscana. He is the author of several contributions on the history of Propaganda Fide and its Archives.

**Giulia Maggiore** is a post-doctoral fellow of the PRIN 2022 Project "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages" (MAT) for which she is developing a webGIS that will integrate historical, topographical and linguistic data. She gained a PhD in Medieval Archaeology from Sapienza University of Rome, focusing on the relationships between History, Archaeology and Topography in the Middle Ages. Her research privileges manuscript sources in Latin, Greek, and several vernaculars and their relationship with archaeological investigations, material culture and landscape study. An expert in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), she has carried out projects of spatial and chronological mapping of both historical events and archaeological sites, in collaboration with Sapienza University of Rome and ISEM-CNR. She is the author of two monographs: *Presenze monastiche nel territorio di Tarquinia* (Miscellanea della Società Romana di Storia Patria, LXI, Roma, 2014) e *Medioevo altolaziale. La valle del Marta* (Ed. Quasar, Roma, 2021).

**Patrizia Morelli** (Archivio Ordine Frati Minori Cappuccini)

***Capuchin Missionaries in Sub-Saharan West Africa: Bridging Faith and Cultures (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century)***

The presentation explores the Capuchin missionaries' efforts in sub-Saharan West Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries. It examines their motivation, their role in cultural mediation, approaches and challenges faced, and the legacy of their work in bridging European Christianity and African traditions.

**Patrizia Morelli** is General Archivist of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin for the Historical Section and Director of the Central Capuchin Library. Her main areas of research are related to Franciscan and Capuchin History and, as a Philologist, to Greek, Latin, Classical, Christian and Byzantine Literature, Patrology, Theology and translations. She has more than fifty publications, entries for theological dictionaries, contributions to scientific reviews, conferences on the themes of ecclesiastical Franciscan and Capuchin history to her credit, including: P. Morelli – S. Saulle, *Anna Comnena la poetessa epica* (Jaca Book 1998); *Ministro generale e arcivescovo: Bernard Christen da Andermatt e il rinnovamento dell'Ordine dei Cappuccini*, trad. dal tedesco (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 2010); *Tre Cappuccini Croati nel panorama culturale europeo del XX sec.* in: *Capuchin Friars in Zagreb 400 Years of Apostolic Work 1618 - 2018. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference on the 400th Anniversary (1618 - 2018)* (Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2022).

**12:00 - Session 2 - PARALLEL ISLAMIC NETWORKS ACROSS AFRICA**

Chair: Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner (CSIC - Incipit, Santiago de Compostela)

Francesco Zappa (Sapienza Università di Roma), *A Contact Zone: "Islamic Languages" in Africa and Beyond*

Nicola Melis (Università di Cagliari), *Tripoli as an Ottoman Gateway to Trans-Saharan Networks (1500–1700)*

**Francesco Zappa** (Sapienza Università di Roma)

***A Contact Zone: “Islamic Languages” in Africa and Beyond***

This paper aims to propose some reflections on an area of language contact parallel to (and partially overlapping with) the space on which this conference focuses, with a view to a possible comparison. It will take as a basis the notion of “Islamic languages” introduced by Alessandro Bausani (1921-1988) in a series of articles published between the 1960s and the 1980s, in which he highlighted the thick network of shared influences that used to connect, in precolonial times, the languages spoken and written in that vast area of the globe that was under Islamic cultural hegemony. Such affinities, he argued, were the outcome of a very peculiar, mainly bookish and top-down kind of language contact, and extended to both religious and secular domains, including literary uses. Building on Bausani’s understanding of Islamic languages, I will focus on sub-Saharan West Africa, which in the early modern era witnessed a rise in the hegemony of Islam among the local political, economic and intellectual elites, relatively close to the Portuguese trading posts along the Atlantic coast. The lack of a planned, centralized missionary activity, however, makes it extremely difficult for the historian to trace back translatory practices associated to Islamic preaching and proselytizing among Muslim and non-Muslim speakers of the local vernaculars. More recent fieldwork on traditional Islamic education in the area can, however, shed some light on the role of oral explanatory practices associated to Islamic education as a vehicle for the influence of Arabic on a large number of local languages.

**Francesco Zappa** is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Sapienza University of Rome, after serving as *maître de conférences* in the same discipline at Aix-Marseille Université. His research interests bridge “classical” Islamic studies, Anthropology, African Languages Studies, Oral Literature and Literacy Studies, focusing on Islam in sub-Saharan West Africa, with special attention to the uses of Bambara/Bamana as a language of Islam in Mali. He carried out fieldwork in Mali in 2000-2001, 2005, 2009-2010. He contributed articles, chapters and one supplement to edited volumes and peer-reviewed academic journals, including *Die Welt des Islams*, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, *Eurasian Studies* and *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*. He is currently part of the research team of the PRIN project “Islamic literatures in sub-Saharan Africa: Themes, Genres, and Publics.”

**Nicola Melis** (Università di Cagliari)

### ***Tripoli as an Ottoman Gateway to Trans-Saharan Networks (1500–1700)***

This presentation explores the pivotal role of Tripoli as a nexus for Ottoman trans-Saharan exchanges between the 16th and 17th centuries. Following its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire in 1551, Tripoli emerged as a crucial hub connecting the Mediterranean with the caravan routes of the Sahara, facilitating the movement of goods, ideas, and people between North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Utilizing a plurality of sources, including Ottoman archival documents preserved at the Turkish State Archive (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*) and local African chronicles such as *Tā'rīkh al-Sūdān* (Al-Sa'di 1900), this study reconstructs the multifaceted interactions between Ottoman provincial authorities and Sub-Saharan entities like the Sultanate of Bornu (Dewière 2017).

Particular attention is given to the imperial strategies that enabled the Ottoman administration to manage regional trade routes, protect caravan networks, and extend political influence into African interiors. Tripoli's role is situated within the broader context of Ottoman cosmopolitan governance, reflecting the empire's ability to adapt its administrative and economic systems to local realities (Lafi 2015; Melis 2013). By integrating perspectives from global history and connected histories, the analysis highlights Tripoli's function as both a political outpost and a cultural bridge, underscoring its significance in the negotiation of regional identities and sovereignties during this period.

This study seeks to deepen understanding of the Ottoman engagement with Africa beyond the coastal provinces, providing a nuanced view of the empire's transcontinental dynamics.

**Nicola Melis** is an Associate Professor of the History of Islamic Countries at the University of Cagliari, where he coordinates research on the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds. His scholarly interests span Ottoman studies, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Mediterranean connections during the early modern and modern periods. Melis has contributed extensively to the fields of Ottoman-African relations and Islamic historiography, with recent works including *Some Observations on the Concept of Dār al-'Ahd in Ottoman Context* (Brill, 2017), *The Ottoman Africa and the Ottomans in Africa* (*Eurasian Studies*, 21, 2, 2023), and *The Caliphate Congress and the Ottoman Sultans* (Routledge, 2024).

His research emphasizes transcontinental dynamics, such as Ottoman-Saharan interactions and Mediterranean cultural exchanges. Among his many projects, he participates in the PRIN Project 2022, "Islamic Literatures in Sub-Saharan Africa." Melis also serves on editorial boards of major academic journals and actively promotes cultural cooperation initiatives between Europe and the Mediterranean.

## 14:30 - Session 3 - ETHIOPIA

Chair: Sabina Pavone (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale)

Matteo Salvatore (American University of Sharjah), *The Production and Circulation of Ethiopianist Knowledge in Early Modern Europe, 1400s-1650s*

Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner (CSIC - Incipit, Santiago de Compostela), *Hermeneutics for Ethiopia. A Laboratory of Texts in the Service of the Jesuit Proselytising Project*

Guia Boni (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale), *Damião de Góis: a Portuguese Humanist at the Courts of Europe*

**Sabina Pavone** (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale)

**Sabina Pavone** is Full Professor in History of Christianity at the University of Naples L'Orientale. Her research area is situated at the intersection of various disciplines: institutional history, religious history and cultural history and focuses on Jesuits missions and conversions in extra-European words. Among her works: *Le astuzie dei gesuiti. Le false Istruzioni segrete della Compagnia di Gesù e la polemica antigesuita nei secoli XVII e XVIII* (2000, English ed. 2005); *I gesuiti dalle origini alla soppressione* (2nd ed. 2021); *Una strana alleanza. La Compagnia di Gesù in Russia dal 1772 al 1820* (2010); with C. Petrolini and V. Lavenia, *Sacre metamorfosi. Racconti di conversione tra Roma e il mondo in età moderna* (2022); co-ed. with G. Capriotti, P.-A. Fabre, *Eloquent Images. Evangelization, Conversions and Propaganda in the Global World of the Early Modern Period* (2022).

**Matteo Salvatore** (American University of Sharjah)

### ***The Production and Circulation of Ethiopianist Knowledge in Early Modern Europe, 1400s-1650s***

This paper outlines the key turning points in Ethiopian-European relations and overviews the circulation and production of Ethiopianist knowledge following the appearance of the first Amharic-Italian lexicon in early 15<sup>th</sup> century Venice, until the printing of Ethiopian language texts by Propaganda Fide's Tipografia Poliglotta in the 1630s. It highlights the leading role that Ethiopian agents played in the emergence of Ethiopian Studies in Europe and discusses their collaboration with European prelates, scholars and missionaries in the production of proto-ethnographic accounts, grammars, and religious texts both in Ethiopian language and translation.

**Matteo Salvatore** is Associate Professor of History at American University of Sharjah. He is a world historian with a research interest in the Horn of Africa and its diaspora. He is the author of *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopian-European Relations, 1402-1555* (Routledge, 2017), and the recent *The Many Lives of Tasfa Seyon: An Ethiopian Intellectual in Early Modern Rome* (Cambridge University Press, 2024). His articles have appeared in *Africa*, the *Journal of African History*, the *Journal of World History*, the *Journal of Early Modern History*, *Northeast African Studies*, *Itinerario*, the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

**Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner** (CSIC - Incipit, Santiago de Compostela)

### ***Hermeneutics for Ethiopia. A Laboratory of Texts in the Service of the Jesuit Proselytising Project***

The Jesuit mission to Ethiopia (1556–1632) was a challenging endeavour: it aimed at converting one of the oldest and most conservative Christian churches to Catholicism, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. One of the strategies the missionaries set up was using hermeneutics and textual criticism. During the decades of strongest Catholic influence in Ethiopia, in the 1610s and 1620s, the Jesuit residences of Gorgora, Qwollela, and Dabsan became laboratories of hermeneutical science: several Spanish and Italian theological treatises were translated into Ge'ez and Amharic, literary milestones of Ethiopian Christianity were scrutinized and amended, and new Catholic-Ethiopian treatises were produced. This project was led by a few skilled European missionaries, such as António Fernandes, Luis de Azevedo, Francesco Antonio de Angelis, Pedro Páez, and Afonso Mendes, but it also relied on the work of several Ethiopian priests and monks, such as Abba Gorgoryos and Abba Zamanuel. Due to the events that unfolded after the expulsion of the missionaries from Ethiopia in 1633, most of these texts were destroyed or lost. A few, however, were published during the period of exile, such as Afonso Mendes's *Bran-Haymanot* and António Fernandes's *Magseph Hassetat*. The study of this fascinating yet little-known intellectual laboratory in Ethiopia can shed light on the broader encounter of cultures that early modern globalization brought about in Africa, Asia, and America.

**Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner** is postdoctoral researcher at the StateHorn project, Incipit-CSIC, Santiago de Compostela. He has been assistant professor of History at Gondar University and scientific editor of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* project at the University of Hamburg. His areas of research are the history of the religious missions in Africa, Ethiopian history, the history of Portuguese expansion in Asia, Italian colonialism in the Horn of Africa and German exploration activities in Somaliland. He has published extensively on these topics in international scholarly journals. He is the author of *Envoys of a Human God: The Jesuit Mission*

to Christian Ethiopia (2015) and co-author of *The Archaeology of the Jesuit Missions in Ethiopia (1557-1632)*. He is currently preparing two books for publication: an edition of Jesuit missionary letters from Ethiopia and a collective volume dedicated to slavery and the slave trade in the Red Sea region.

**Guia Boni** (Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale)

***Damião de Góis: a Portuguese Humanist at the Courts of Europe***

In 1540 in Leuven, at the request of the bishop of Uppsala, Damião de Góis (1502-1574) published *Fides, Religio Moresque Æthiopum*. In this volume, the Portuguese humanist promoted Ethiopian Christianity, with which he had come into contact twice. The first, as a very young man, when, having just arrived at court, he had witnessed the arrival of Mateus, the first ambassador sent by Queen Helena to King D. Manuel (1514). Years later, during one of his stays in his homeland, Damião de Góis had met and conversed with Sāgā za-Ab, who had arrived with Rodrigo de Lima's embassy and had been badly received by the court theologians, who contested his beliefs in every respect. Damião de Góis, on the other hand, had a friendly conversation with him and asked him to write a pamphlet, a memorandum that he would later translate into Latin. In fact, the Portuguese humanist did not limit himself to the translation, but supplemented the text with other documents he managed to procure. As Luís André Nepomuceno asserts *Fides, Religio Moresque Æthiopum* is one of the most intriguing books of the Renaissance precisely because it is a text with several voices. With our communication, we intend to dwell on this volume, which in Portugal was forbidden the year after its publication, on the figure of Damião de Góis and his ecumenical vision of religion that clashed, once he returned to his homeland, with a country that, at least since 1536, when the tribunal of the Holy Inquisition had arrived, seemed to have lost that adventurous and open spirit that had prompted it to send its first ambassadors (Afonso de Paiva, Pero da Covilhã, Rodrigo de Lima) precisely in search of the land of legendary Prester John.

**Guia Boni** is Associate Professor of Portuguese Language and Translation at the University of Naples L'Orientale. She has worked on Portuguese travel literature both in the East (Fernão Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinazione*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2022, for which she received the National Prize for Translation in 2023) and in Europe (*Un portoghese nella Roma del Cinquecento*, Roma, Bagatto, 2003). As a translator, she is interested in the translations of poets and novelists (Jorge de Sena translator of Rimbaud, of Ada Negri; Haroldo de Campos translator of Ungaretti or, vice versa, Ungaretti translator of Vinicius de Moraes and Mário de Andrade or even Alexandre O'Neill grappling with *La pelle* by Curzio Malaparte).

## 16:30 - Session 4 - MAPPING, TRANSLATING AND CLASSIFYING AFRICA IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Chair: Matteo Salvatore (American University of Sharjah)

Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), *Placing and Classifying Africa for a Japanese Audience: The De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam (Macao 1590) and the Contempt for Africa and Blackness*

Paolo De Troia (Sapienza Università di Roma), *"The Lord of Heaven gives to man without limit": Africa in 17th-Century Sino-Jesuit Atlases*

Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *"His slave, our slave, your slave, their slaves": the Place of Africa in Missionary Grammars*

**Angelo Cattaneo** (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

### ***Placing and Classifying Africa for a Japanese Audience: The De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam (Macao 1590) and the Contempt for Africa and Blackness***

The *De missione legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam curiam* was first composed in Spanish by Alessandro Valignano S.J. between 1588 and 1589, soon after the return to Macau of the four Japanese boys who had been sent by him to the Roman curia to pay homage to the pope and promote the cause of the Christian mission in Japan. The complete title of the work asserts that it had been compiled by adapting the travel notes taken by the Japanese boys over the course of about six years, between February 1582, when they left Nagasaki, and 1588, when they reached Macao again, after visiting the major Catholic courts, in Portugal, Spain and the Italian peninsula, and sailing through Macao, Melaka, Cochim (Kochi), Goa, and circumnavigating Africa twice, on the outward and return journeys. Turned into a dialogue, divided into 34 *colloquia* and translated into Latin, the *De missione* was published in Macao by the Jesuit press between 1589 and 1590 as a text on missionary policy, diplomacy, propaganda and pedagogy (ed. Massarella Moran 2012; ed. Russo 2016).

Beside praising the splendour of European Christian courts, through geography and cosmography and by explicitly referring to Abraham Ortelius' maps in the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (first edition, Antwerp 1570), the *De missione* aimed at revealing the whole globe to the Japanese political and cultural élites, as part of the Jesuit religious proselytism whose legitimacy, according to Valignano, rested on the cultural supremacy of Christian Europe over all the peoples of the Earth.

According to Valignano, the global missionary advancement of Christianity not only promoted the spiritual message and the salvation of souls, but also gave the world access to a superior civilization. In addition to being enlightened by the grace of Christianity, according to Valignano there were two main interrelated scientific reasons that sanctioned Europe's superiority over other continents. The first cause was astronomical: Europe was in the so-called “temperate zone,” between the Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Circle. This very location protected Europe from excessive heat and cold, promoting the temperance of its inhabitants and the development of industrious activities. This belief was accompanied by the assumption of a supposed “natural superiority” of whites over darker-skinned peoples: “In the second place if we compare Europe with Asia and Africa we find the inhabitants of Europe to be white in colour, fair of face, and with comely features, but the Africans mostly black, and the Asiatics at least dark, on the whole, and blackish. This means that although there are some who are endowed with a white colour and who can be said to be clever, all the others, who are almost black, are by nature crude and unrefined” (*Colloquium XXXIV*, p. 407-408; ed. Massarella-Moran, p. 446; ed. Russo, p. 520). The *De missione* explicitly charted a spatial, racial and mission hierarchy on a global scale: in Valignano's missionary vision and plans, Black Africa was inexorably confined to a rearguard position.

**Angelo Cattaneo** is Principal Investigator for the CNR - National Research Council, Rome and Adjunct Professor at the University of Florence. His research focuses on the history of mapping, travel literature, and of cultural encounters, in particular on missionary practices and linguistics at the interface of European and Asian empires (1250-1700). He is the P.I. of the PRIN 2022 Project “Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages. Experiences from the Missions connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)”. His publications include *Fra Mauro's Mappa mundi and Fifteenth-Century Venice* (2011), *Tradurre il mondo. Le missioni, il portoghese e nuovi spazi di lingue connesse* (2022), and the edited volumes *Interactions between Rivals. The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan* (2021), and *Language Dynamics in the Early Modern World* (2022). In 2024 he was appointed Visiting Professor at Yale University.

**Paolo De Troia** (Sapienza Università di Roma)

### ***“The Lord of Heaven gives to man without limit”: Africa in 17th-Century Sino-Jesuit Atlases***

During the 1600s, European knowledge of the African continent was shaped by a combination of geographic exploration, missionary accounts, and commercial interests. This period marked a gradual shift from medieval myths and stereotypes about the continent to a more detailed, though often Eurocentric, understanding. Jesuit missionaries were central to the dissemination

of information about the continent. As from East Asia, in their attempt to convert China, Jesuits realized some important geographical and cartographic works, in order to present the Western culture to the Chinese *literati*. These works contained description and information about the African countries: those geographical descriptions emphasised Africa's natural wealth, including gold, ivory, and spices, while also recounting practices they considered "exotic" or "barbaric," thereby contributing in some way to the enduring stereotypes about African societies. Notwithstanding these limitations, the contributions of Jesuit writings and geographic influenced in some way Chinese intellectual discourse. In my paper I will give a synoptic description of Sino-Jesuit geographical works, then I will try to share some images of Africa contained in this material in Chinese literary language.

**Paolo De Troia** (MA in Oriental Languages, PhD in Asian and African Civilisation) is Associate Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at the Department of Italian Institute of Oriental Studies at Sapienza University of Rome, where he teaches Chinese Language and Translation and Chinese Philology of Chinese Language. During his training years, he specialised at Nanjing University and Beijing Normal University. His research interests and publications mainly focus on the history of Sino-Western contacts in science in the Ming era, from a cultural and lexical perspective. He has to his credit numerous publications on the scientific production of the Jesuits of the Chinese mission in the 17th century.

**Simone Celani** (Università di Roma Sapienza)

***"His slave, our slave, your slave, their slaves": the Place of Africa in Missionary Grammars.***

For Fernão de Oliveira, the first grammarian of the Portuguese language, Africa was a space to be dominated with language, as Rome had done in the past with the ancient world. This was to happen punctually, not only as Oliveira understood it, i.e. through the spread of Portuguese, but also through the study of indigenous languages. As Sylvain Auroux has written, the 'process of "grammatisation" has profoundly changed the ecology of human communication and has given the West the means of knowledge and domination over the other cultures of the planet'; in fact, it is a 'technological revolution' that has imposed an extremely oriented categorisation, classifying each idiom on the basis of the parameters of the Greco-Latin tradition. Foreign languages, in essence, had to be known and described through the deforming lens of the descriptive instruments of the Western tradition. This fact does not diminish the importance of the development of linguistic knowledge in the early modern age, but it does tell us that this process took place by applying a specific linguistic 'gradient' that classified languages according to their structural distance or proximity to the Latin metalinguistic tradition. Since language is the main form of complex thought, this "gradient" has also become cultural, identifying the

complexity of the manifestations of the people who speak it. Despite the different skills and dispositions of the grammarians, which certainly determine much of the characteristics of their works, it can be clearly seen that among the various missionary grammars written between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, different degrees of descriptive and structural complexity, and even different chronological phases, can be identified. If, for Asia and the Americas, the composition of grammars begins towards the middle of the 16th century, for Africa it begins a century later and includes works that tend to be 'instrumental', lacking any particular depth and, above all, even minimal notations of cultural scope. Even the supposedly "neutral" grammatical-linguistic study thus constructs a reductive image of African languages, as can be seen from a passage in the anonymous *Arte da língua de Cafre* (ca. 1680): "The language of Cafre is very limited and is not formed like other languages." This is essentially a reductionist strategy; in keeping with the function that the study of these languages should have had: more than catechesis and trade, exploitation and slavery.

**Simone Celani** is Full Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Language and Translation at the University of Rome La Sapienza and coordinator of the "António Vieira" Chair (Instituto Camões/Portugal). His main areas of research are related to linguistic historiography, translation, philology of contemporary works (in particular Fernando Pessoa), Lusophone Africa. He has more than a hundred publications to his credit, including *L'Africa di lingua portoghese* (2003), *Alle origini della grammaticografia portoghese* (2012), *Riscritture d'autore. La creazione letteraria nelle varianti macro-testuali* (2016), *O espólio Pessoa* (2020). He also co-edited the volumes *Lingue romanze in Africa* (2021) and *Culture di lingua portoghese* (2023).

**Friday, 31 January 2025 - Sapienza Università di Roma - Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia - Aula Partenone**

### **9:30 - Session 5 - PERSPECTIVES ON ENSLAVEMENT**

Chair: Cécile Fromont (Harvard University)

Festo Mkenda SJ (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu), *Moulding a Language for Slavery: The Preponderance of Slaves and Enslaving Practices in António Gomes' 1648 Viagem ao Império de Monomotapa*

José Lingna Nafafé (University of Bristol), *Legal and Religious Languages of the Portuguese Slave Trade Challenged in Favour of Universal Freedom: the Case of Lourenço da Silva Mendonça*

Luis Martínez Ferrer (Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma), *Emanuele Ne Vunda, Known as the "Negrita," and His Embassy to Rome from the Congo (1604-1608)*

Glória de Santana Paula (Centre for History of the University of Lisbon, CH-ULisboa), *"Cafraria": The Construction of a Geographical and Anthropological Category*

**Festo Mkenda SJ** (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu)

***Moulding a Language for Slavery: The Preponderance of Slaves and Enslaving Practices in António Gomes' 1648 Viagem ao Imperio de Monomotapa***

The Jesuit Antonón Gomes SJ (b. c.1595) was present in southeastern Africa in the second and third decades of the seventeenth century. From his own travels and from accounts gathered from others, he later wrote his *Viagem q'Fez o Padre Antonio Gomes...ao Imperio de Monomotapa* in 1648. As an account thus compiled from first-hand and second-hand sources, Gomes's *Viagem* is a valuable source of information about southeastern Africa during an important period in the history of the African continent. The slave trade, which happened as a trickle in early 16<sup>th</sup> century, was operating in full capacity when Gomes wrote the *Viagem*. Although the Jesuit author does not address the trade, his account contains numerous references to African slave-holding societies, slave cultures and local enslaving practices. In some instances these references appear to be so exaggerated that they raise questions about the account's authenticity. The doubt is augmented by the fact that Gomes was writing at a time when Jesuits and others were under pressure to provide moral arguments for the trade in humans. The arguments often came in the form proof that the humans that were being offered for sale already existed as slaves in their native societies and their relocation elsewhere amounted to improvement on their social and spiritual welfare. In this presentation, I will be arguing that the preponderance of slaves and enslaving practices in Gomes' *Viagem* ought to be understood more within the broader context of the slave trade than within the limited realities of the African societies he visited or heard about. Understood in this way, the *Viagem* manifests that Gomes used and contributed to a lexicon that was required in the slave-trading environment of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Festo Mkenda, SJ**, is a Jesuit priest from Tanzania, who currently serves as Academic Director of the Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus (ARSI). A historian of Africa, Dr Mkenda holds an

MA from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, and a DPhil from the University of Oxford. Now mainly researching Jesuit history in Africa, his recent publications include *Jesuits in Africa: A Historical Narrative from Ignatius of Loyola to Pedro Arrupe* (Brill, 2022) and *A Splash of Diamond: The Jesuit Presence in Ethiopia from 1945 to the Present* (JHIA and IHSI, 2023).

**José Lingna Nafafé** (University of Bristol)

***African Lourenço da Silva Mendonça: Legal and Religious Languages of the Portuguese Slave Trade Challenged in Favour of Universal Freedom***

Understanding the significance of language when it comes to Portugal's historical relationship with Africa from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries onwards requires a multiple approach. Nevertheless, there are vital proxies which can help to explore how significant the place of language was for both the Portuguese idea of Africa and the expansion of Portuguese political hegemony in the precolonial phase. In the first place it is important to emphasise the significance of the study of language in articulating the early African-European relationships. The place of language is vital in understanding cultural exchange and transformation, and in thinking through the terms and human experiences through which commercial exchange took place. Intriguingly, the Portuguese worldview became dominant in terms of understanding the history of the region, because they offer the 'sources' which must be studied. Their languages and concepts became the yardstick from which to measure African history. Historians of the Atlantic are quite happy to take lessons in Portuguese, Latin, Spanish, or Dutch in order to have access to the documents in the archive about the Portuguese experience in Africa, but few would bother to learn an African language, which often is not seen as a carrier of knowledge. Lourenço da Silva Mendonça, born into a royal family in Angola, and a multilingual Christian, developed a sustained critique of slavery and took a case to the papal courts in an attempt to have it declared illegal by the Catholic church. The court case of Mendonça in 1684 challenged the centrality of the Luso-Hispanic legal, ideological, and linguistic interpretation of the enslavement of Africans in the seventeenth century. In this paper, I will argue that Mendonça used his linguistic skills of the European languages to repudiate them in favour of African humanity.

**José Lingna Nafafé** is an Associate Professor of African and Atlantic History, Department of Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, University of Bristol, and was the first Director of the MA in Black Humanities. His academic interests embrace inter-related areas

linked by the overarching themes of: the Black Atlantic abolitionist movement in the 17th Century; the Lusophone Atlantic African diaspora; wage-labour, 1792-1850; race, religion and ethnicity; Luso-African migrants; 'Europe in Africa' and 'Africa in Europe'; and the postcolonial theory. He was nominated on 'The BME Power List 2018 – Bristol's 100 Most Influential BME People' for having "advanced the history on resistance to enslavement through ground-breaking research which African Voices Forum shared at the Afrika Eye Film Festival in 2017. His recent publications include the Best Award-Winning book of the African Studies Association of the UK, *Laurenço da Silva Mendonça, and the Black Atlantic Abolitionist Movement in the 17th Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2022. One of BBC History Magazine's Books of the Year and one of the five best books written on 'The History of Angola' (pre-20th century), History books, African History, 2023. He is currently writing a third monograph on: Beyond Wilberforce's Experiment in Abolitionism: Yellow Fever Epidemic, Unfree Labour and the Market, 1792-1870.

**Luis Martinez Ferrer** (Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma)

***Emanuele Ne Vunda, Known as the "Negrita," and His Embassy to Rome from the Congo (1604-1608)***

Drawing on documentation preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Archives in Portuguese-Congolese, Italian, and Spanish, this study presents and analyses the human drama of the Congolese ambassador Emanuele Ne Vunda, known as the "Negrita," during his journey from Mbanza Congo (the capital of the Kingdom of Kongo, which is located in Angola nowadays) to Rome between 1604 and 1608. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical and political context during the reign of Álvaro II Nimi a Nkanga, King of Kongo from 1587 to 1614, and focuses on the personal vicissitudes of Ne Vunda. The journey is examined in detail, including the initial Atlantic leg, the period spent in the Iberian Peninsula, and the final journey to Italy, culminating in his death in Rome in the presence of pope Paul V.

**Luis Martinez Ferrer** is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Church History at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontificia Università della Santa Croce (Rome). Among his publications: *"Coisas do outro mundo" A Missão em Roma de António Manuel, Príncipe de N'Funta, conhecido per "o Negrita" (1604-1608), na Roma de Paulo V*, (with Marco Nocca), Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano 2003; *Tercer Concilio Limense (1583-1591). Edición bilingüe de los decretos* (en colaboración con José Luis Gutiérrez), Facultad de Teología Pontificia y Civil de Lima, Universidad Pontificia de la Santa Cruz, Ediciones San Pablo, Lima 2017; *Indigeni e*

*cristiani? Il dialogo tra evangelizzazione e culture indigene in America Latina (sec. XV-XVIII)*, Tau Editrice, Todi (Pg) 2023.

**Glória de Santana Paula** (Centre for History of the University of Lisbon, CH-ULisboa)

***“Cafraria”: The Construction of a Geographical and Anthropological Category***

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the historical construction of “Cafraria” as a category of representation and classification of territories and societies in Southeast Africa, based on exogenous conceptions and perspectives. We start from Portuguese sources from the 16th and 17th centuries but seek to clarify some stereotypes inherited from different historical periods. Representations function as an analytical tool that allows us to look at the testimonies of the time as materializations of ideas and concepts integrated into an epistemological architecture that determined the interrelationships between Europeans and the various African peoples, cultures and spaces.

In this sense, several questions arise: how and when did the Arabic word *kāfir* enter Portuguese speech? What signs and images were associated with this categorizing word? How did the macro-toponym “Cafraria” come about and what was its geographical scope? What experiences of interrelationship with Southeast African communities contributed to the consolidation of these classificatory categories? In what sense did these words, integrated into the Portuguese and European discourses of the modern era, assert themselves as meta-concepts that made it possible to classify and hierarchize a part of humanity?

**Glória de Santana Paula** holds a PhD (2022) in History, specialising in African History, from the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, and a MA (2000) in Early Modern History, from the same University. She is a researcher at the Centre of History of the University of Lisbon, carrying out her professional activity as a history teacher in Júlio Dantas High School, in Lagos, and as a guest lecturer at the School of Education and Communication of the University of Algarve. Her main research interests are the representations of peoples and territories of Southeast Africa in the 16th and 17th centuries, through Portuguese documentation; perceptions of otherness, production of discourses and processes of transmission of categories, concepts and stereotypes; shipwreck accounts and the echoes of the integration of shipwrecked people into the communities of Southeast Africa.

## 12:00 - Session 6 - VISUAL AND MATERIAL INTERACTIONS AND EXCHANGES

Chair: Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Vera-Simone Schulz (Leuphana University, Lüneburg - Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz), *Matters of Scale. Afro-Eurasian Connectivity in Coastal East Africa*

Cécile Fromont (Harvard University), *Idol? Image? Fetish? Naming Spiritually Empowered Things of the Early Modern Central African*

Deborah Dainese (Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich), *Tiotioro? Material Translation and Transcultural Entanglements in the Modern Era: A Case Study from the Ethnographic Collections of the Ethnological Museum "Anima Mundi" (Vatican Museums)*

Gaia Delpino, Rosa Anna Di Lella (Museo delle Civiltà, Roma), *Translated Objects, Narrated Objects. African Collections of the Museum of Civilizations between Representations, Misunderstandings and Silences*

**Vera-Simone Schulz** (Leuphana University, Lüneburg - Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz)

### ***Matters of Scale. Afro-Eurasian Connectivity in Coastal East Africa***

Coastal East Africa has been connected to regions in the interior of the African continent and across the Indian ocean for millennia. This talk sheds new light on Afro-Eurasia connectivity along the Swahili coast by focusing on two time periods: the 13th-14th century CE as a period 'before European hegemony' (Abu-Lughod 1989), and the time after 1500 when Portuguese ships started to become protagonists in coastal East Africa. Complexifying notions of connectivity and resistance, the paper interrogates intersections between short-distance and long-distance relationships along and beyond the Swahili coast. It illuminates the role of architecture, visual and material culture in these dynamics, transcultural encounters, processes of transfer, but also misunderstandings, and failed endeavours that occurred during the early modern period. The talk interrogates what it can mean for art history to pay more attention to coastal East Africa as a region that has been traditionally marginalized within the discipline, highlighting the needs for interdisciplinary dialogue and sounding out both the potentials and challenges for transcultural art histories today.

**Vera-Simone Schulz** is W1 Professor for Transcultural Art History at Leuphana University and Associate Scholar at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - MPI. She is the P.I. of "Material Migrations: Mamluk Metalwork across Afro-Eurasia", funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation, and the P.I. of "Epistemologies of Conviviality: Temporalities and Aesthetics of the Built

Environment across the Horn of Africa and Beyond”, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. Holding a PhD in art history from Humboldt University in Berlin, her work is situated at the crossroads of African, Islamic and European art histories and critical museology. Her research has been supported by the Bard Graduate Center in New York, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and the University of Cambridge, among others.

**Cécile Fromont** (Harvard University)

***Idol? Image? Fetish? Naming Spiritually Empowered Things of the Early Modern Central African***

This paper addresses the cross-cultural process of naming different categories of empowered objects created in central Africa in the early modern period. Artists, ritual specialists, and lay individuals created these early modern things within the context of long-distance trade, human trafficking, Catholic proselytism, and sustained cross-cultural encounter. Some of the productions inscribed themselves within local ancient practices. Others emerged from a new early modern Atlantic environment. Both categories challenged European categories of objecthood and understanding of the relationship between the material world and the insensible forces influencing its course.

**Cécile Fromont** is an art historian specializing on the visual, material, and religious cultures of Africa, Latin America, and Europe in the early modern period (1500-1800). She is the author of *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (2014) and *Images on a Mission in Early Modern Kongo and Angola* (2022).

**Deborah Dainese** (Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich)

***Tiotioro? Material Translation and Transcultural Entanglements in the Modern Era: A Case Study from the Ethnographic Collections of the Ethnological Museum “Anima Mundi” (Vatican Museums)***

An eight-page handwritten document, divided into macro-geographical areas and containing a list of numbers -sometimes accompanied by a brief description- is all that remains today of the oldest nucleus of ethnographic artefacts in the Vatican Museums.

They may have been transferred in 1928 from the Museum of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, the Borgiano Museum, to the Missionary and Ethnological Museum in the Lateran, and then to the Vatican Museums. Founded in 1883 at the headquarters of the Propaganda in Piazza di

Spagna, the Borgiano Museum contained objects from the legacy of Cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731-1804), together with other pieces collected by Catholic missionaries since 1622. Unfortunately, much of the provenance documentation was lost during the transfer of the material to the Lateran Museum. As the collection was dismantled and moved, individual artefacts were dispersed according to their geographical relevance (Khan, 2023). However, “one of the few ornaments” (Colini, 1886) from the so-called “Upper Guinea”, exhibited in the Borgiano Museum, has survived. It was almost forgotten, in both the storerooms of the Lateran and then of the Ethnological Museum “Anima Mundi” (Vatican Museums). Beginning with the brief description left on the object, this paper will use the body adornment documented as “tiotioro” as a prism through which multi-layered narratives and complex histories that merged into the object can be observed. I will also address issues regarding the (mis)interpretation and translation of indigenous terms, to complexify histories of connectivity and circulation of materials to link the Catholic Church to imperial discourses of collecting and curating non-Western artefacts.

**Deborah Dainese** is a final year CHASE-funded PhD candidate at Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (Norwich, United Kingdom). Her research consists in writing the biography of the Congolese artist Gabriel Nestor Matshitolo Mwata Sola (1915-2001), who lived and worked in the Kwango-Kwilu region in the mid-Twentieth century. She is particularly interested in Congolese colonial and post-colonial art, archives, and missionary exhibitions. Deborah had previously worked as Assistant Curator for Africa at the Ethnological Museum “Anima Mundi”, Vatican Museums.

**Gaia Delpino, Rosa Anna Di Lella** (Museo delle Civiltà, Roma)

***Translated Objects, Narrated Objects. African Collections of the Museum of Civilizations between Representations, Misunderstandings and Silences***

Since the creation of ethnographic and colonial museums, ‘other’ societies have been represented through collections consisting of objects and works of art by means of Western categories and classifications. What translations have been made of objects and works of art from the past of other societies on the African continent? What stories and narratives can be made today? Starting with selected case studies on works and objects from the Museum of Civilizations’ collections, the contribution will deal with research and projects that emphasise the plurality of voices, perspectives and narratives that can be pursued by putting forward a critical perspective on the reinterpretation of a contested and sensitive cultural heritage.

**Gaia Delpino** holds a Ph.D. in contemporary cultural anthropology. Specialized in African studies, she conducted several research and projects related to memory, heritage and cultural tourism in Ghana. At the Museo delle Civiltà, she is curator of the collections of African Arts and Cultures as well as of those coming from the former Colonial Museum of Rome.

**Rosa Anna Di Lella** is a cultural anthropologist with a specialisation in Museum Studies and North Africa collections. She has collaborated with several institutions in participatory museography projects, including the European projects READ-ME – Network of Ethnographic Museums and Diaspora Associations (2008–2012) and SWICH – Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage (2019–2023). At the Museum of Civilizations, she is curator of the collections of the former Colonial Museum of Rome and responsible for the Educational Department. Her interests focus on processes of mediation of contested and sensitive heritage, collaborative practices and provenance research.

## 15:30 - Session 7 - LINGUISTIC INTERACTIONS AND EXCHANGES

Chair: Barbara Turchetta (Università di Bergamo), Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)  
Mariagrazia Russo (Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma), *Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo (1621-1678) and his testimony as a missionary in Africa*

Gonçalo Fernandes (University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real), *Pioneering Linguistic Descriptions of Bantu Languages in 17th-Century Angola and Kongo*

Dominique Tougbo Koffi (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan), *Legacy of the Slave Trade in the Endogenous Linguistic Universe of Côte d'Ivoire*

Béatrice Akissi Boutin (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Societies and Linguistic Exchanges between Europeans and Africans on the West Coast of the Gulf of Guinea (15th-18th c.). New Evidences*

Nicolas Quint (CNRS/ EPHE/ INALCO, Parigi), *Capeverdean Creole: an Overview of the Conditions of Emergence of an Afro-Portuguese Language born from Linguistic and Intercultural Contact*

**Mariagrazia Russo** (Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma)

***Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo (1621-1678) and His Testimony as a Missionary in Africa***

This contribution is intended on the one hand to inform about Cavazzi's manuscripts of the *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba et Angola*, observing their contents and narrative modes, and on the other hand to make some considerations on the information provided by Cavazzi in order to observe their sources and above all their legendary and mythical reinterpretation.

**Mariagrazia Russo** is Rector of the University of International Studies in Rome - UNINT. She graduated from the University La Sapienza in Rome and the Sorbonne in Paris, and has held the position of Associate Professor at the University of Tuscia. At the University for International Studies in Rome, she is also Full Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Language and Translation e coordinator of the "Vasco da Gama" Chair (Instituto Camões/Portugal). Her research interests, which originated in the Galician-Portuguese philological-medieval field, have been supported by archive research with the discovery of unpublished documentation shedding light on important events in the history of the Lusitanian world (among others, Alexandre Metelo's embassy in China, João de Barros, Diogo do Couto, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, Rainha Jinga Mbandi; Tomás Pereira; Martino Martini; António Vieira and the Sephardic diaspora; the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal). She addressed aspects of critical-literary issues relating to 16th-century canzoniere culture, as well as modern and contemporary Portuguese, African and Brazilian literature; intertextual readings aimed at highlighting the close relationships over the centuries between Italy and Portuguese-speaking countries; translating and editing Angolan, Brazilian, Cape Verdean and Portuguese literary works; linguistic contact studies; analyses in the fields of orthography, lexicography, toponymy and glottodidactics. Particularly interested in missionary linguistics with reflections on Lusitan-Italian and Italian-Lusitan-Chinese and Japanese diplomacy.

**Gonçalo Fernandes** (Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Vila Real)

***Pioneering Linguistic Descriptions of Bantu Languages in 17th-Century Angola and Kongo***

The earliest descriptions of Bantu languages date back to the 17th century, with works published by European missionaries following the Portuguese Patronage. During this period, the Kingdom of Portugal reestablished its sovereignty after being under Spanish rulers from

1580 to 1640. However, recognition by the Holy See was delayed. Spain formally acknowledged Portuguese independence in 1668 with the Treaty of Lisbon under King Afonso VI of Portugal (1643–1683) and Charles II of Spain (1661–1700). On the other hand, the Mbundu Kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba (modern-day northern Angola) were ruled by Queen Nzinga Mbandi (c. 1582–1663), baptized Ana de Sousa. Missionary efforts in the Kingdom of Kongo began in 1491 with the Secular Canons of St. John the Evangelist.

Jesuits arrived in 1548, followed by Franciscans after 1557. 1645 Capuchin friars began their mission, establishing an Apostolic Prefecture in São Sa Congo under the Propaganda Fide. Initially composed of Spanish and Italian Capuchins, the mission saw the expulsion of the Spanish friars in 1658, leaving only Italians to continue the work.

This period saw the publication of significant linguistic works, including:

1. *Gentio de Angola* (Lisbon, 1642; Rome, 1661) by Francesco Pacconio, S.J. (1589–1641), António do Couto, S.J. (1614–1666), and António Maria da Monte Prandone, O.F.M. (1607–1687).

2. *Regulae quaedam pro difficillimi Congensium idiomatis faciliori captu* by Giacinto Brugiotti da Vetralla, O.F.M. (1601–1659), the first grammar of a Bantu language.

3. *Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum, et Congense* (c. 1648), a trilingual Latin-Spanish-Kikongo dictionary by Italian and Spanish Capuchins, supervised by Manuel de Roboredo (Francisco de São Salvador, O.F.M.Cap.), a Portuguese-Congolese mestizo priest. Francesco Pacconio's catechism, *Gentio de Angola*, offered the first modest description of (Cahenda-Mbaca) Kimbundu. Co-authored with António do Couto, it included a six-page linguistic guide, *Advertencias para se ler a lingua de Angola* (Lisbon, 1642), outlining ten rules for reading and pronouncing the Angolan language. In 1661, António Maria da Monte Prandone published a revised Latin edition in Rome, *Gentilis Angolae fidei mysteriis*, adding linguistic and cultural reflections that made him a co-author rather than a mere translator.

Giacinto Brugiotti da Vetralla's *Regulae quaedam pro difficillimi Congensium idiomatis faciliori captu ad grammaticae normam redactae* (Rome, 1659) was the first grammar of a Bantu language. He sought to model Kikongo grammar on Latin grammatical structures but introduced significant innovations due to the differences between Latin and Bantu languages. For example, Brugiotti avoided using the term “declensions” for word variations, instead coining the novel term *principiationes* (“principiations”). A Portuguese translation of this work, *Regras para, mais facil intelligencia do difficil idioma do Congo, reduzidas á forma de grammatica*, was reissued in 1886 by Bishop António Tomás da Silva Leitão e Castro (1848–1901).

The *Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum, et Congense* is the oldest surviving Bantu dictionary. Comprising 121 folios, it features 10,000 Latin entries with Spanish and Kikongo translations. Based on Nebrija's Latin-Spanish dictionary (likely the 1581 Antequera edition), it documents

both Kikongo vocabulary and European concepts, highlighting cultural exchanges with Portuguese through loanwords such as “alface” (lettuce), “cavalo” (horse), and “prata” (silver). A 2024 semi-diplomatic edition by Lima & Fernandes is now accessible through the *Monumenta Portugaliae Linguistica (PML)* project.

This talk explores the pioneering linguistic works produced in the 17th-century Kingdoms of Ngola and Kongo, highlighting their historical, cultural, and linguistic significance. The main purpose is to provide a comprehensive analysis of these texts, emphasizing their role in shaping early linguistic thought and their enduring legacy in African language studies, particularly during the reign of Queen Nzinga Mbandi. By revisiting these foundational works, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical interplay between European and African linguistic traditions.

**Gonçalo Fernandes** is Associate Professor at UTAD (Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro) - Studies in Letters (CEL) since 2017 and is an active collaborator in international research networks with institutions in Japan, Brazil, the Netherlands, France, and Spain. His research focuses on Portuguese linguistics, the historiography of Latin-Portuguese linguistics, and Missionary Linguistics in regions under Portuguese Royal Patronage, including Angola, Mozambique, India, Japan, China, and Vietnam. He has an extensive publication list, with over 100 scholarly works, including articles and book chapters in leading journals and by renowned publishers such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Routledge, Taylor & Francis, John Benjamins, Nodus Publikationen, and Peeters. Among his contributions are chapters like “Missionary and Subsequent Traditions in Africa” (Cambridge World History of Lexicography), “The First Known Grammar of the (Kahenda-Mbaka) Kimbundu (Lisbon 1697) and Álvares’ *Ars Minor* (Lisbon 1573)”, and “Primeiras Descrições das Línguas Africanas em Língua Portuguesa” [First Descriptions of African Languages in Portuguese].

Throughout his career, he has held key leadership roles, including Director of the Department of Letters, Arts, and Communication (2009–2013), coordinator of several undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral programs, President of the Pedagogical Council of the School of Human and Social Sciences (2017–2021), and Vice-Rector for Internationalization at UTAD (2021–2022).

**Dominique Tougbo Koffi** (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan)

***Legacy of the Slave Trade in the Endogenous Linguistic Universe of Côte d'Ivoire***

Between the second half of the 15th century and the 19th century, Africa was the fertile ground for the transatlantic slave trade. There's no longer any need to underline the consequences for people and societies then and now, so much has been written and published on the subject. Historians have made their own contribution to this duty to remember. From a linguistic point of view, over the last few decades we have invested ourselves in the search for traces of this phenomenon, first in Portuguese and in Brazilian culture (1997 and 2021), then in the cultural and linguistic universe of the West African zone between the Cavally river (western border of Côte d'Ivoire) and the eastern border of Benin (2013) and finally, more specifically in recent years, in the endogenous linguistic universe of Côte d'Ivoire, a universe made up of some sixty agraphic languages that fall into four groups of the large Niger-Congo family and whose populations have had, during the period indicated, as in many other sub-Saharan regions, long commercial contacts with the Portuguese, English and Dutch. The field surveys we carried out as part of this research enabled us to discover duly attested lexemes and build up a fairly rich *corpus*, the analysis of which, based on linguistic descriptivism, culminated in the publication of our latest book (2024), published last August by L'Harmattan, in which we highlight the morpho-phonetic-phonological and prosodic procedures used in the borrowing process to demonstrate the Lusitanicity and Englishness of several dozen terms borrowed from the languages of these European peoples.

**Dominique Tougbo Koffi** is a Lusitanian teacher-researcher and linguist from Côte d'Ivoire, with degrees from the National University of Côte d'Ivoire, the University of São Paulo and the University of Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle, who has been working in higher education for over three decades. He has supervised over a hundred Masters courses and some fifteen doctoral theses defended under his supervision. Former Technical Advisor for Arts and Culture to the Minister of Culture and Francophonie, creator and former Director of the Department of Portuguese, former Director of the Department of Iberian and Latin American Studies at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, he is currently Head of the Artistic and Cultural Education Program and Director of Training at the Ministry of Culture and Francophonie, member of the Scientific Committee of the "Slave Route of Côte d'Ivoire" project and Country and West Africa Representative on the Steering Committee (COPIL) of the Institute of the Francophony for Education and Formation (IFEFF). He is the author of several scientific articles, co-author of a joint book and author of 3 books, mainly in the fields of lexicology and lexicography.

**Béatrice Akissi Boutin** (Sapienza Università di Roma)

***Societies and Linguistic Exchanges between Europeans and Africans on the West Coast of the Gulf of Guinea (15th-18th c.). New Evidences***

The western coasts of the Gulf of Guinea correspond to the area from Côte d'Ivoire to present-day Benin, and essentially to the Kwa ethnolinguistic group of the large Niger-Congo-Kordofan family. Varieties of Portuguese were used in this area between the end of the 15th century and the end of the 18th century in conjunction with African languages, but there is little historical research, and even less in linguistics or historical sociolinguistics. We propose to reconstruct how exchanges between European traders and missionaries, particularly Portuguese, and Kwa traders and authorities might have taken place, on the basis of early European narrative and evangelistic texts, as well as historical works on the Kwa peoples.

**Béatrice Akissi Boutin** is a researcher at La Sapienza University (Department of Political Science) and at the Institute of Applied Linguistics in Abidjan (Felix Houphouët-Boigny University). A linguist and sociolinguist, she is interested in situations of plurilingualism, linguistic change and emerging mixed languages. She has directed or participated in several international French corpus projects and surveys in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic. She has several books on Côte d'Ivoire French and eighty publications on these subjects, including phonological and syntactic descriptions of African French and languages in contact, and sociolinguistic studies, including *Exploring Hybridity in Ivorian French and Nouchi* (In Hurst-Harosh & Mesthrie (eds), *Youth Language Practices and Urban Language Contact in Africa*, CUP, 2021), *Les langues gbè dans les premiers écrits européens* (with Moufoutaou Adjeraan Status Quaestionis, 2023).

**Nicolas Quint** (CNRS/ EPHE/ INALCO, Parigi)

***Capeverdean Creole: an Overview of the Conditions of Emergence of an Afro-Portuguese Language Born from Linguistic and Intercultural Contact***

Capeverdean is an Afro-Portuguese Creole language spoken today by 1,000,000 people across the World, including most of the population of the Republic of Cape Verde – an Archipelago of nine inhabited islands situated at approximately 500 km off the peninsula of Dakar, in West Africa – and various diasporic communities established in America (USA), Europe (Portugal, France, Netherlands, Italy), and Africa (Senegal, Angola).

In this talk, I examine the conditions of emergence of the Capeverdean language and culture, which took shape as an outcome of Portuguese colonial expansion. Firstly, I deal with the

historical conditions that lead to the appearance of Capeverdean, evoking briefly the arrival of Portuguese sailors in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the cultural and linguistic landscape they were faced with. Secondly, I mention the most obvious linguistic evidence of the Afro-Portuguese character of Capeverdean, i.e. the lexicon: indeed, although most Capeverdean words are Portuguese-derived, this Creole language also encloses a small but historically and culturally significant amount of African-derived items. Thirdly, I show how this African component is pervasive at every level of Capeverdean grammar, where it coexists with typical Romance features. This dual Afro-European heritage allows us to consider the Capeverdean language as a result of a process of intense linguistic and intercultural contact between West Africans and Portuguese, which must have taken place during the first century following the settlement of the Archipelago (in the 1460s).

**Nicolas Quint** ([https://llacan.cnrs.fr/p\\_quint.php](https://llacan.cnrs.fr/p_quint.php)) is a senior researcher in linguistics at LLACAN-UMR8135 (CNRS/EPHE/INALCO, Paris, France). He is mainly involved in the description of languages belonging to the three following groups: Upper Guinea Afro-Portuguese Creoles (Capeverdean, Casamance and Guinea-Bissau Creoles, and Papiamentu), Niger-Congo (Kordofanian and Nyun), and Romance (primarily Occitan). In the field of Creole studies, Nicolas Quint has devoted his PhD to Capeverdean (at *Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3*) and has published a reference grammar of Capeverdean, a comparative study, several dictionaries, textbooks, translations both to and from Capeverdean and Casamance Creoles (e.g. *Tintin* or *le Petit Prince*), as well as several tens of papers and book chapters dealing with the phonology, morphology, African substrate, typological profile and phylogenetical classification of Upper Guinea Creoles. He has done extensive fieldwork in all Upper Guinea Creole-speaking areas for three decades (since 1995-2025), supervised 5 PhDs on Capeverdean and Casamance Creole, and organized several conferences and workshops on Creole linguistics. Since 2022, Nicolas Quint is the president of the ACBLPE (Association of Portuguese and Spanish-Lexified Creoles). He is also co-responsible for a project on the syntax of Creole languages (<https://scroll.humanum.fr/>).

## 18:00 - Final Remarks

## ADDRESS AND CONTACTS

The conference will be held in Rome on 30 and 31 January 2025, at Sapienza Università di Roma, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Aula Partenone. Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5 - 00185 Roma.

The *Programme* and the *Book of Abstracts* are available online at:

<https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/mapping-translating-prin22-cnr/workshop-2025>

The conference is conceived, organised and hosted by the **PRIN 2022 Project “Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages: Experiences from the Missions connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)”** - ref. 20222SY2K7:

<https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/mapping-translating-prin22-cnr/home>

There are no registration and participation fees. The official language of the conference is English.

Scan the QR code for the route from the entrance of Sapienza (Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5) to the Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia.



### 30-31 January 2025

Sapienza Università di Roma  
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia  
Aula Partenone  
P.le Aldo Moro, 5  
00185 Rome

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## Intersecting Sub-Saharan Africa, 1450-1700

### Trade, Conquest, Missions, Enslavement

#### Concept and scientific organisation

Angelo Cattaneo, Simone Celani, Giulia Maggiore

#### Scientific Committee

Angelo Cattaneo, Simone Celani, Béatrice Akissi Boutin, Paolo De Troia, Cécile Fromont,  
Michela Graziosi, Giulia Maggiore, Sabina Pavone, Carlo Pelliccia, Flavio Rurale

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